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ABSTRACT

To investigate the use of classroom journals to improve teachers' instruction, a study analyzed teachers' dialogue learning logs and collected data on teachers' response patterns. Subjects were teachers of college writing who were participating in a five-week summer seminar for doctoral students in rhetoric. Teachers responded to classroom readings, the class in general, and papers they were writing. Additionally, teachers met outside the class in groups of three for two 1-hour sessions each week, to share their learning logs. Thirteen learning logs were coded for response types and subjects. The study focused on three three-member learning log groups and the nine logs they compiled and shared. Examples of response codes include recording, responding to, or questioning information or events, consolidating systems or concepts, and predicting future interactions of information or events. Examples of subject codes include a focus on readings, class content, instructor, or self-analysis. Analysis revealed that not only did individual teachers have a priority of concerns when entering learning log materials, but also that groups developed particular response focuses and ways of discussing the pedagogy seminar. Overall, log writers spent the majority of their time recording, responding, or questioning material, and subjects focused on class readings, the instructor, or themselves. Group roles were influenced by individual roles, and group patterns were often attributable to a dominant member or members. (Two tables of data and six figures, including sample log entries, are included.) (MM)

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Teachers as Learners: Negotiated Roles in College Writing Teachers' Learning Logs

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Toby Fulwiler, the editor The Journal Book, defines the function and purpose of journal or learning log writings in educational settings. He says:

> When people write about something they learn it better. That, in a nutshell, is the idea behind asking students to keep journals. While some of us who assign these personal notebooks might argue about what they should be called--logs, learning logs, daybooks, thinkbooks, dialectical notebooks, field notebooks, diaries, whatever--we would not disagree about their purpose and value: writing helps our students learn things better and these notebooks provide a place in which to write informally yet systematically in order to seek, discover, speculate, and figure things out. (p. 9)

Interestingly, little material in this pedagogically focussed collection specifically substantiates such claims through research. However, using anecdote, informal case study, self-study, historical review and other methods, essay writer after essay writer in Fulwiler's volume affirms the value of journal writing for writing students.

Beyond the writing classroom, journals are often used, and claimed a successful pedagogical tool, for teachers in teacher

CS211681

training programs like those sponsored by the BAWP and NWP sites (Kelly 1984; Rossi 1982). Deckert (1988). Janesick (1983), and Holly (1983) among others suggest that teacher's should keep classroom journals to improve their own instruction, and Newman (1988) discusses her methods for using teacher/student dialogue journals in the teacher training classroom to help monitor student-teachers' progress and to model journal writing for those teachers' own writing classrooms. Yet, again, little research data is available that tells us what really happens when teachers use such journals or logs.

As part of a larger study of writing teacher development, I had the opportunity to analyze writing teachers' dialogue learning logs and collect data on teachers' response patterns. The learning logs I studied were unique in that the teachers in the graduate level pedagogy seminar formed log groups, sharing and responding to each other's entries both verbally and by writing responses during their weekly meetings. The data and observations I will share today focus primarily on an analysis of the learning log texts but also rely on information gained during the larger study which included numerous interviews with these writing teachers and their teacher trainer, participant-observation of the pedagogy seminar, taping of selected learning log group meetings, and so on.

THE STUDY

During a five week summer seminar for doctoral students in rhetoric who were also teachers of college writing with anywhere from three to twenty years teaching experience, teachers were introduced to current theory and pedagogy for teaching basic writing. Teachers were directed by their instructor to respond to readings, the class, papers they were writing, and so on. The instructor, whom I call Dr. Thomas A. Bridges, handed out a discussion of possible learning log response patterns taken from Mayher, Lester, and Pradl (1983). For instance, learning log writers were encouraged to question, rehearse, invent or consolidate material in their responses. Additionally, the instructor asked teachers to meet outside of class in groups of three for two, one hour sessions each week, to share their learning logs.

By using these groups, the instructor, Tom Bridges, hoped to encourage teachers to evaluate and assimilate theory and research in composition and learn to apply their new learning to their next writing classroom. Also, he expected to model the value of learning logs or journal keeping as a pedagogical tool for student writers. Tom Bridges did not himself respond in the learning logs, relying instead on the peer groups to provide response. He collected the logs at the end of the five week course along with teachers' final papers.

ANALYSIS OF LEARNING LOGS

To better understand teachers' log response types and subjects, I coded thirteen learning logs which ranged from 25

handwritten pages to 105 handwritten pages and from 15 single spaced typed pages to 66 double spaced typed pages. The average learning log was 609 T-units in length. Therefore, I coded almost 8,000 T-units, after developing these codes from the instructions given to the teachers by Tom Bridges their seminar instructor and from class topics. See figures 1 and 2 below for response type codes and subject codes.

To analyze and draw conclusions from this wealth of data, I focussed on three, three member learning log groups and the nine logs they compiled and shared. I chose to code the logs myself following the practice described by McCarthy (1987) in her study, "A Stranger in a Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum." McCarthy used her knowledge of the writers' context to analyze data, looking for "confirmability" with other naturalistic data rather than agreement among raters (p. 241). Equally, in the case of this project, codes were intended to provide a general analysis of teachers' writing by subject and focus. See Figure 3 for a small sample of a coded log.

Once I had coded the logs, I tabulated the types of responses in order to analyze response tendencies and patterns: did one teacher respond to more than analyze class material? Did another teacher focus on her own classroom teaching or on the seminar readings and so on?

Additionally, because the logs included written dialogue from peers, I evaluated these peer responses by a simpler coding system (see figure 4) to analyze what role the peer took in

In this T-Unit:

REC: The log writer records information or events.

RES: The log writer responds to information or events.

QUES: The log writer questions information or events.

REHERS: The log writer rehearses a role (example: prepares statements about readings that she might later insert into a class discussion almost word-for-word) or uses jargon (example: after reading about writer's block begins to use terms like "algorithmic" or "heuristic" or "blockers and non-blockers")

CONC: The log writer connects information and or class or learning events.

CONSOL: The log writer consolidates, summarizes, or interrelates systems and/or concepts, perhaps linking readings from one class to readings from another, and so on.

PRE: The log writer predicts future interactions of information or events. This category often contained references to future teaching practices or graduate study plans.

INVEN: The log writer invents new material from concepts/and or relationships. This category was activated in a few cases but more often participants were working to consolidate or synthesize material rather than creating new material.

A/S/L: The log writer makes analytical or synthesizing comments on his own learning process (example: comparing how little he knew early in the class to what he knows at a later entry time period). [metacognitive monitoring]

A/S/T: The log writer makes analytical or synthesizing comments on Tom Bridges' teaching methods in the Teaching Basic Writing seminar. [metateaching monitoring]

A/S/W: The log writer makes analytical or synthesizing comments on his or her own writing in the log or for class (for example: a participant observes how he qualifies all this statements with remarks like "based on the literature" and indicates his awareness that his writing style and thinking has changed, and so on). [metalinguistic monitoring]

FIGURE 1. Learning log WRITERS' RESPONSE codes.

Note: Instructor's original source for learning log writing directions come from Mayher, Lester, & Pradl (1983 p. 24).
Note: Source for all figures and tables: Bishop 1988.

The log writer's T-Unit primarily:

R = focuses on the TBW seminar or doctoral program readings
C = focuses on content or activities of the Teaching Basic Writing class (seminar)
I = focuses on the instructor Tom Bridges (or on his methods)
LL = focuses on the learning log or learning log group
S = focuses on personal concerns and/or self-analysis
T = focuses on log writer's own teaching or the teaching profession in general
O-S = focuses on other participants of the TBW seminar
O-GP = focuses on the graduate program or the field of composition studies in general
O-H = focuses on the teacher's home institution (includes colleagues, administrators, and so on)

FIGURE 2. Learning log WRITERS' SUBJECT codes.

I like
Perl's explanation of
RES-R "retrospective structuring" to clarify the recursive nature of making meaning./ She also does a good job in discussing the
RES-R features of BWs that many of us have seen so often in our classess--role confusion, selective perception, egocentricity, etc./ But discerning these problems and doing
CONC-T something about them are two entirely different things./ Her first principle that teachers must identify which
RES-R characteristic components of <u>each</u> student's process facilitate writing and which inhibit it before they can do any good is certainly sound./ [.I felt the
AGR-KEN same way when I read it. Ken] It is also a very daunting challenge for each of us
CONC-T to put into practice, given the constraints of our teaching situations./

Flower. Writer-based prose. Flower really puts her finger on the BW complaint "I
RES-R know what I want to say, but I just can't put it into words."/ The gulf between psychological meaning and reader-based
CONSOL-R expression is a tough one to bridge for all but the most articulate of us;/ I can
RES-R really empathize with those kids./ [.me
AGR-KEN too. Ken]

<u>FIGURE 3</u>. Section of coded learning log for Reed (a Scholar): Log Group 1.

Peer responds to log writer primarily by:

AGR: agreeing with log writer's statements

QUES: questioning log writer about assertions or statements

CHAL: challenging log writer, often by offering a disconfirming or perplexing reading of a text or personal experience

EXT: extending the discussion started by the log writer

SUP: supporting the log writer with sympathy, encouragement, and any generally empathetic remark

+H: using a humorous or ironic tone to break tension, mark further solidarity, or for sheer word play

FIGURE 4. Learning log PEER RESPONSE codes.

general: was the peer supportive, challenging, questioning, and so on? And, did groups, due to peer response, have, negotiate, or change overall group response patterns? Today, I will talk mainly about such negotiations, the ways individuals and groups took on response directions and the ways, particularly, group members' facilitated or hindered other group members' learning.

SOME RESULTS

T-unit analysis confirmed my observational feelings that not only did individual teachers have a priority of concerns when entering learning log materials but also that groups developed particular response focuses and ways of discussing the pedagogy seminar.

Overall, in type of response categories, log writers spent the majority of their time RECORDing or RESPONDing or QUESTIONing material.

Overall, for subjects of response categories, log writers focussed on class READINGS or TEACHING, or themselves (SELF-ANALYSIS).

Often these focuses were somewhat exclusive. That is, some log writers were predominately concerned with the readings, the materials of the class. Others seemed to use the readings only as a springboard for talking about their own teaching, their own institution, or themselves and their life roles. A few log writers had a split interest or a wide-ranging interest in several subjects areas.

The log analysis, then, yielded a rude "thumbprint" of the log writer's interests or what Holland (1980) calls an "identity theme." Three models of entries developed: those in which the log writer focused on class issues and readings; those in which the log writer focussed on a his/her own teaching, home institution, or general feelings about the teaching profession; and those in which the log writer shared entries across several subjects, usually reading, teaching and the individual. To simplify future discussions, these models for log response will be referred to as Scholar, Practitioner, and Analyst. Individual's exhibited preferences for these response models as did groups which took on took on Scholar, Practitioner, or

Analyst response patterns, too.

For instance:

Two Scholars and an Analyst in Group 1 = a Scholar focussed group.

Two Practitioners (one very dominantly so) and one split interest Practitioner/Analyst member in group 2 = a Practitioner focussed group.

Three Analyst group members (again with one of these analysts also a highly dominant member) in group 3 = an Analyst group.

Response patterns for the three groups are summarized in Table 1 in your handout where you'll see that the Scholar group focussed on readings 59% of the time. Practitioners focussed on Teaching 41% of the time and Analysts distributed their responses across more categories than the other two groups.

Finally, it was hard to determine if individuals' responses molded group responses or if group interactions helped to tailor and modify individual responses. It seemed that influence traveled both directions. To show this mutual influence of individual on group and group on individual, let's look briefly at the three groups.

Clearly, group roles were influenced by individual roles, for groups patterns were often attributable to a dominant member

TABLE 1
Learning Log Group Focus by Category and T-Unit %.

	Group 1 Scholars focus on readings	Group 2 Practitioners focus on teaching	Group 3 Analysts focus on several subjects
READING	59%	24%	36%
TEACHING	21%	41%	23%
SELF	10%	19%	16%
ALL OTHER CATEGORIES	10%	16%	25%

Note: numbers represent group averages in this category; under TEACHING, T-units for TEACHING and O-H (own HOME INSTITUTION) have been combined.

or members. For instance, in the all male, three member Scholar group. two members were second year doctoral students who were using the readings and log responses to help them "cram" for upcoming exams. Their responses were often summaries or analysis of the seminar's theory based readings, material they expected to be tested on. Here is one representative entry:

> These researchers' four studies are interesting, and I will comment on what I feel are a few-significant findings. I understand more clearly now how planning facilitates translation by targeting a cluster of information in the long-term memory and making it available for translation into sentences. The process works in reverse, where the writing of sentences

> changes the plans, and perhaps even changes the "understanding of the topic" (124).

The third member of the scholar group did not really have such strong scholarly tendencies himself. He was a first year doctoral student with much stronger interests in Self-Analysis; he often asked questions about the class and the instructor's teaching practices and his own learning. However, the two Scholarly group members often chided this writer and gave him directions in his log that asked for more explicit and deeper responses to the readings.

Similarly, in the Practitioner group--consisting of three females--a single dominant member's concerns directed groups responses and sometimes overwhelmed the interests of the other two, less assertive, members. This dominant teacher in the practitioner group had an unexpectedly high number of log entries that recorded her past teaching practices. As she read each new class article, she exhibited a strong tendency to take every reading and examine it in light of her own teaching or that of her always less enlightened colleagues at her home. These habits appeared in her first entry and continued throughout the log, including her last entry which I will quote here:

> Although I LOVE electronic composing, I always knew that it would be a problem in many classroom

> situations. Between my experiences and the literature I've read, my gut feelings about electronic composing were not off target. One of the problems of using computers in the classroom is that many schools merely insert a word processing component into their writing classes without making the word processor part of the composing process. For instance, a nearby Catholic college called me two years ago and asked me to teach a "computers and writing course, starting the next day." Some computers and writing class!....

The dominant member of the practitioner group responded to her two somewhat less pedagogically concerned peers with continuous teaching tips, forcing the group to remain, primarily, at the pedagogy--hints and tips--level, in spite of the other members' desire to spend more time on theory. Additionally, this thoroughgoing attention to pedagogy seemed to allow that teacher to avoid the class materials and new theory rather than to engage in self-critique toward curricular revision.

The Analyst group proved more complicated to categorize. This two male, one female group had worked together previously in a first summer session class and chose their group due to their previous acquaintance and knowledge that they could work together. As a whole, Analysts spent more time discussing and monitoring their logs and log group progress than did any other

groups and wrote more extensively--both number of log entries and number of peer responses--which appeared to be an attribute of the Analyst model log writer.

This group also had a dominant member who had the highest total number of entries of any teacher. He, more than the other two members, pushed for affective responses, group solidarity, and so on. At the same time, he was more emotional in some of his responses, both written and oral. For instance, at one point, this group experienced some tension during a group meeting as the dominant Analyst member took exception to joking comments from the other two members. At that point, the group carefully renegotiated their group rules and commitment to writing. After that time, it appeared that both of the less self-analytical members were somewhat more guarded in their responses with the dominant member, often using light humor and primarily supportive remarks when addressing him in writing, but not necessarily doing so with each other.

As a result, the Analysts' entries took a "cheerleader" tone as members encouraged and supported each members' efforts. Much like therapy support group interactions, members, especially after this confrontation, were sure to place solidarity and encouragement at the core of their work. Sometimes this seemed to lead to a downgrading of inquiry.

Here is a sample entry, from early in his log, showing the dominant members' eclectic response style:

> ....My feeling after our first class is that this is one course that is better suited to a regular 15 week semester, for the simple reason that there seems to be so much meat to the course that a student would need no less than 15 weeks just to begin to digest it. Carnation Instant Breakfast has all of the nutrition of a two-egg, bacon, and toast breakfast, but I'd rather eat the latter than drink the former. And since I'm speaking of eggs, I'll continue the metaphor, so that I can get finally to my point--will we have sufficient incubation time to give the material the thoughtfulness that it seems due.

In each group, peer responses and concerns influenced other group members, sometimes enhancing and sometimes suppressing their observations. Although no single role guaranteed class engagement, those teachers who had scholar or analyst response patterns appeared to assimilate class materials more thoroughly than those who focussed on pedagogy--<u>when pedagogical response looked backward</u>--in the form of simply reviewing past teaching practices--<u>rather than forward to curricular revision and reform</u>.

The models of Scholar, Practitioner, and Analyst presented here are tentative ways to discuss complex processes and these very limited samples of log entries do not do justice to the fruitful whole of more than 5,000 T-units of writing content in

these nine logs.

To summarize, I'd like to overview teachers' responses to keeping learning logs and then add a few observations that I made that might help other teacher trainers use such logs and log groups even more effectively.

TEACHERS' RESPONSES

These teachers found the log and log groups valuable. When the instructor had teachers fill out a questionnaire on group work, teachers consistently rated the groups as useful and productive, although they suggested some useful changes. See table 2 and Figure 5 for teachers' responses.

Of particular interest, the open response statements in Figure 2 detail some of the problems groups encountered, and some suggested modifications members thought they might make. Groups felt torn between the supportive nature of group talk and their need to be efficient and to complete their work within an hour. Handwritten logs presented a reading problem. Extensive or boring or repetitive entries slowed group progress. Some members felt they agreed too much with each other or didn't play Devil's advocate often enough with the class materials, pointing to a social rather than educational focus for these groups, while other group members worried about their overly dominant member. Finally, groups in this survey, and also as recorded in comments in the logs, sometimes found keeping logs "just another task," particularly at the end of the session when they were writing final papers. The group members offered useful suggestions for

TABLE 2
Responses to Pedagogy Seminar Learning Log Groups: Instructor Questionnaire, Likert-Type Questions

Questions[a]	Average Score[b]
1. My general reaction to the experience	4.31[c]
2. Efficiency of group in doing it's job	4.43
3. Involvement of members in doing our job	4.6
4. How effective was I as a group member	4.2

Note: [a]Source: Inventory 6, p. 52, from Teachers and Learners: The Interactive Process of Education by Alfred H. Gorman, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969. [b]Scale: 5 excellent/1 poor [c]N=16

1. Problems of group as I see them:
   A. Technical
      .sometimes more talk than writing but talk makes group feel close
      .poor handwriting
      .closely written entries hard to read
   B. Time
      .extensive writers take a long time to read
      .too much to read in one session
      .some scheduling difficulties
   C. Attitude/Affect
      .sometimes entry is just another task
      .too much summary is boring, repetitious
      .one member claims to have "all the answers"
      .some views too convergent "makes me a little nervous when we agree so much"
2. What can I do to help?
      .time management
      .write less & on important points; condense summaries
      .play Devil's advocate more often
      .refuse to talk; give more written responses in logs
3. How could he [instructor] better meet the needs of myself and the class?
      .@50% of remarks: well done; well planned
      .instructor should review logs at least once to let writers know entries satisfy course requirements
      .keep up in-class groupwork
      .let journal groups share their progress during an in-class session
      .let instructor share his ideas on learning log group topics

FIGURE 5. Responses to pedagogy seminar learning log groups: Instructor questionnaire, open response questions.

their own problems, mainly in the area of time management.

Finally, several remarks about how Tom Bridges, the instructor, could have helped the groups or individuals in groups were informative: instructor should review logs, let writers know they're doing the right thing, continue group work in the classroom, vary membership in classroom groups and let groups have some class time to share their progress. Several of these comments pointed to a teacher desire to have the instructor more involved in the group process.

Finally, I noted several other functions or facets of group learning logs in this study that may provide insights for others using a similar method. They are summarized in Figure 6 and point to future research questions and directions.

Instructors using learning logs for advanced pedagogy seminars as in this study may wish to consider arguments for greater instructor monitoring of groups even among advanced and highly motivated teachers like these. Also, intervention early in the log keeping process may move groups in the direction that the instructor feels is most productive or may correct lopsided tendencies (Scholars who don't connect to teaching; Practitioners who don't connect to theory; Analysts who strive for group "good feelings" at the expense of the class issues; overly dominant or blocked group members).

This research study begins to illuminate the complex learning patterns of practicing writing teachers who are retraining in composition studies. Newman (1988) reminds us the

A. A strong type of response pattern from one member may elicit a similar type of response pattern from other members
B. Writer's response pattern (thumbprint, identity theme) is often set early and does not appear to undergo drastic changes.
C. Amount (#) of responses may but does not always represent fuller engagement with the material. (For example, Analysts tend to write more, tell more stories and relate out of class materials.)
D. Because a writer is an Analyst, it does not immediately follow that such a writer will have a deeper understanding or fuller engagement with the material. (For example, one member in the Analyst group complained in interview that the group was too focussed on the final project--primarily due to the concerns of the other two members. Analysis of the logs did not bear out that perception; the complaining member seemed also to use entries to enforce group discussion of final projects and to enforce the group's self-generated status quo).
E. Swift movement from readings to self-analysis (in the form of life or teaching considerations) may indicate a superficial engagement of class materials.
F. Higher consideration (meta-awareness and monitoring) of pedagogy classroom, instructor and log groups appeared to be a hallmark of Analysts.
G. Peer responses intended to extend a discussion (one teacher writing in another teacher's journal to add to the discussion rather than to question or contradict) can be of two very different types: 1) essentially supportive in nature and meant to extend discussion (peer to peer) or 2) more patronizing, "Here's how I do it" (practitioner to novice).
H. Analysts can take on cheerleader tendencies "Aren't we a great group" that may function at the expense of deeper insights or engagement with class materials.

FIGURE 6. Researcher's observations about group work.

value of exploring these patterns and teachers' negotiation of learning roles when she explains that "The journal dialogues...function as mirrors for reflecting our beliefs back to us. Through our journal dialogues we find ways of examining our assumptions and expressing our tentative understanding" (p. 155). This seems true for our writing students and for many of us should we become teacher-learners, negotiating our roles and understandings in an advanced pedagogy seminar.

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